

70

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON

AUG 13 1948

My dear Senator Hayden:

Reference is made to your letter of August 4 enclosing copies of two telegrams from Robert O. Kelly, Arizona State Surplus Property Officer, and Thomas L. Kimball, Director of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, and a copy of a letter of July 15 from Mr. Thomas Peyton of the War Assets Administration relative to the disposal of land in Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

The Department of the Army declared Fort Huachuca in Arizona surplus to the War Assets Administration for disposal. Within Fort Huachuca there are approximately 50,000 acres of public domain and 25,000 acres of State and private land acquired by the Army. The public lands were withdrawn for the use of the Army and ordinarily when such lands are no longer needed by that Department they are returned to the public domain. Through the disposal of surplus war materials and property by the War Assets Administration, the public lands which are substantially improved, and such unimproved public lands needed for the proper use of the improvements, and declared surplus by the military agencies are disposed of by that Administration, and the remaining unimproved lands are returned to the public domain.

When this Department was notified that Fort Huachuca was being declared surplus it appeared that a large amount of the former public domain lands should be returned to the public domain, since the improvements embraced only a rather small portion of the large area. We raised this question with the War Assets Administration and requested that any unimproved public lands be returned. However, it developed that the State agencies which were interested in the land would require all or a substantial amount of it for their purpose. Because of the public and beneficial nature of the work of the State agencies, there was no desire on our part to handicap them in obtaining the surplus lands at Fort Huachuca which they needed to complement the use of the improvements.

At the informal conference on August 2 mentioned in your letter between representatives of our Bureau of Land Management and the War Assets Administration it developed that while the War Assets Administration had not made any definite commitments on the disposal of the lands in Fort Huachuca, their disposal plans had advanced to the point where they were about ready to dispose of the land and improvements. Since the disposal procedure had progressed so far and it appeared that the State agencies would require a

substantial amount of the lands in Fort Huachuca to properly utilize the improvements and conduct their activities, it was decided that the War Assets Administration should proceed with the disposal and return any of the lands in the surplus declaration to this Department which were not needed by the State agencies.

Sincerely yours,

C. Girard Davidson

Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

Hon. Carl Hayden,

United States Senate.